# Long Creek Park

## Management Plan

### Public Review Draft

Disclaimer: This draft management plan contains preliminary proposals that are subject to change and therefore may not necessarily reflect the position of the Ministry of Environment. At the conclusion of the planning process, a revised management plan will be approved by the Ministry.

January 2016

BRITISH COLUMBIA | BC Parks

# Long Creek Park

# Draft Management Plan

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# 1.0 Introduction

## 1.1 Management Plan Purpose

The purpose of this management plan is to guide the management of Long Creek Park. This management plan:

- articulates the key features and values of the park;
- identifies appropriate types and levels of management activities;
- determines appropriate levels of use and development;
- establishes a long-term vision and management objectives for the park; and
- responds to current and predicted threats and opportunities by defining a set of management strategies to achieve the management vision and objectives.

## 1.2 Planning Area

Long Creek Park, 254 hectares in size, is located about 96 kilometres northeast of the City of Williams Lake and 5 kilometres northwest of the northern arm of Quesnel Lake (see Figure 1 and Figure 2). The park is situated in a relatively remote and rugged forest-wetland mosaic located at an elevation of about 1,700 metres, and is not connected to the provincial road system, making it only accessible by foot from nearby logging roads.

Long Creek drains a small to medium sized watershed, and flows through Long Creek Park into Quesnel Lake.

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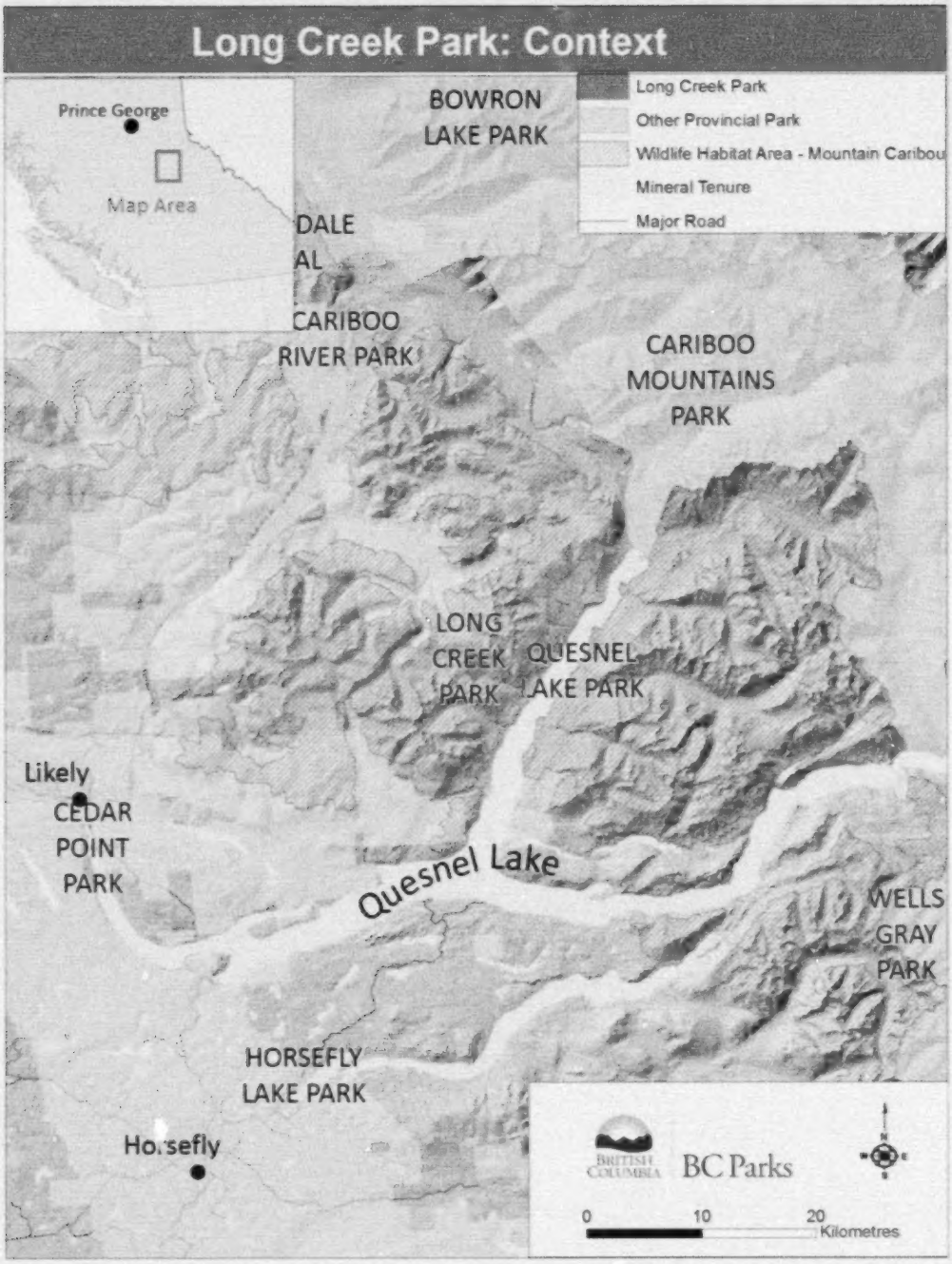


**Figure 1: Context Map for Long Creek Park**

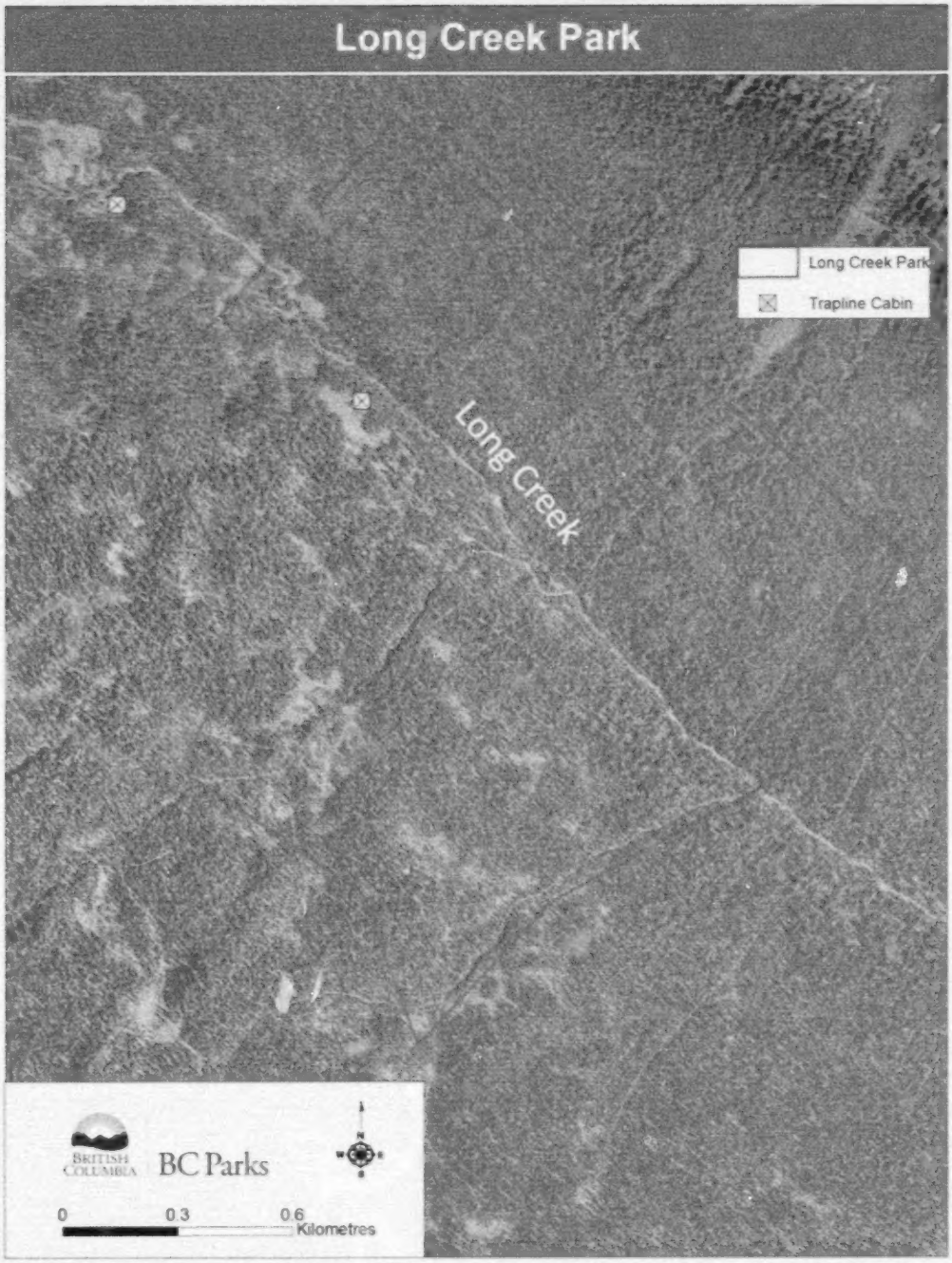


**Figure 2: Map of Long Creek Park**

## 1.3 Adjacent Land Use

The terrestrial lands and waters adjacent to Long Creek Park consist of Crown land with several designated and tenured uses as described below.

Long Creek Park is partially surrounded by forestry lands, including tenured lands. Forestry is a historic and continuing activity in the area surrounding Long Creek Park and includes operating areas adjacent to the park although presently there are no active cutblock licenses immediately adjacent to the park, and any timber harvesting seems more likely at lower elevations than the park. Land Use Objectives for the Cariboo-Chilcotin Land-Use Plan Area, including those for Old Growth Management Areas, are being applied in operating areas in the vicinity of the park.

Mineral tenures occur in the vicinity of the park particularly north and northeast of the park boundary with the closest tenure approximately 1,200 metres away from the park (see Figure 1).

Trapline, guide outfitter, and range tenure areas both surround and overlap with the park. A cabin northwest of the park is associated with the trapline (see Figure 2).

Two licenses of occupation for guided nature viewing and other commercial recreation both surround and overlap the park.

General Wildlife Measures for a Wildlife Habitat Area for Mountain Cariboo established under the *Government Actions Regulation* are also being applied to operating areas in the vicinity of the park (see Figure 1). The Wildlife Habitat Area also overlaps with the park (see details in section 2.2).

## 1.4 Management Commitments/Agreements

During the implementation of the Cariboo-Chilcotin Land-Use Plan[1], the following general guidance was provided for park management in the land use plan area:

- A protected area is land on which the dominant ecological values should be protected and that uses, such as recreation, cattle grazing (except the Junction Sheep Range), hunting, trapping and backcountry tourism, will be allowed.
- Hunting and trapping will continue to be allowed in all new protected areas.

## 1.5 Land Uses, Tenures and Interests

Some tenures predate park establishment including one trapline, one guide outfitter territory, and two tenures for commercial recreation activities such as guided wildlife viewing. A cabin adjacent to Long Creek in the northern portion of the park is associated

[1] Cariboo-Chilcotin Land-Use Plan 90 Day Implementation Process Final Report, February 1995

with the trapline (See Figure 2). The trapline and guide outfitter tenures are authorized under the *Wildlife Act and also* must be authorized through a park use permit under the *Park Act*. The commercial recreation tenures were before park establishment authorized under the *Land Act* and must now be authorized through a park use permit under the *Park Act*.

The Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations administers a range tenure for grazing that predates park establishment. This tenure is authorized under the *Range Act* and associated with the guide outfitter.

## 1.6 Management Planning Process

BC Parks initiated a management planning process for Long Creek Park in the summer of 2015. Background information was compiled that identifies important natural and cultural values, as well as recreational and economic interests to be incorporated into the management plan for the park. As part of an initial comment period, BC Parks invited First Nations and stakeholders to provide information on the values, future direction, activities and future management objectives and strategies for Long Creek Park. Input received during the public review of this draft management plan will be taken into consideration in the development of the final management plan.

## 1.7 Relationship with First Nations

The Province and First Nations governments are working toward a relationship based on respect, recognition and accommodation of aboriginal title and rights. This management plan proposes to develop working relationships between BC Parks and First Nations in a number of areas to ensure that management of the park considers their traditional uses.

Long Creek Park lies within the asserted traditional territory of eight First Nations: Xatśūll First Nation, Northern Secwepemc Tribal Council, Neskonlith Indian Band, Tsilhqot'in National Government (Engagement Zone A), Lhtako Dene Nation, Carrier Chilcotin Tribal Council, and Williams Lake Indian Band.

## 1.8 Relationship with Communities

Long Creek Park is in the Cariboo Regional District. Likely and Horsefly are the closest communities to Long Creek Park. Likely is located at the west arm of Quesnel Lake and 36 kilometres southwest of Long Creek Park. Horsefly is located approximately 15 kilometres south of Quesnel Lake and 50 kilometres southwest of Long Creek Park (see Figure 1). Many residents who live in the regional district and its communities share an interest in the management of Long Creek Park.

Ongoing engagement and outreach with the Cariboo Regional District and its local communities will be required to ensure that residents are aware of, and supportive of the Long Creek Park Management Plan. This will include continued dialogue with residents of Likely and Horsefly and any provincial and/or local interest groups or local governments who have expressed interest in the use and management of the park.

# 2.0 Values and Roles of the Park

## 2.1 Significance in the Protected Areas System

The primary role of Long Creek Park is to protect a regionally rare mineral spring which Mountain Caribou and other wildlife use to supplement their mineral intake.

Such mineral licks are essential in helping ungulates maintain their bodies' reserves of vital elements such as magnesium, calcium, and sodium which may especially be important in spring. The Long Creek mineral lick is regionally significant because, in the landscapes in and adjacent to the park, it is currently the only known mineral spring used by the red-listed southern mountain population of the Mountain Caribou. These caribou use the mineral lick mostly from May to August. Mineral licks are formally recognized as a key feature of critical habitat for such caribou[2].

**Figure 3: Mineral Lick at Long Creek Park**

## 2.2 Biodiversity and Natural Heritage Values

Long Creek Park is completely in the Quesnel Highland Ecosection of which approximately 115,490 hectares or 15% are provincially protected. A small part of this is contributed by Long Creek Park. This ecosection is a transitional highland area, sandwiched between the

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[2] Environment Canada. 2014. Recovery Strategy for Woodland Caribou, Southern Mountain population (*Rangifer tarandus caribou*) in Canada. Species at Risk Act Recovery Strategy Series. Environment Canada, Ottawa.

lower plateaus to the west and the higher rugged mountains to the east. There are remnants of highly dissected plateaus of moderate relief gradually rising from west to east. Glaciers covered all of this area which resulted in greatly rounded summits.

The park falls entirely within the Engelmann Spruce-Subalpine Fir (ESSF) biogeoclimatic zone[3]. The ESSF zone is characterized by severe climate with long cold winters and short cool summers. Only trees that are able to survive long periods of frozen ground occur, with Engelmann spruce and sub-alpine fir dominating wetter areas, lodgepole pine dominating after disturbance, and mountain hemlock in higher snowfall areas.

The park contributes to the provincial protection of two variants of the ESSF zone. The park contributes minimally to the provincial protection of the Cariboo Wet Cold Variant (ESSF wc 3). This variant is wet and cold with widely spaced and grouped forests. The park also contributes minimally to the provincial protection of the Cariboo Wet Cool Variant (ESSF wk 1). The ESSF wk 1 is, with a mean annual precipitation of 1,044 mm, a very wet variant in this region. As a result, vegetation in this variant is vigorous compared to other ESSF units. Both of these variants are relatively well represented in the provincial protected areas system.

The park consists mostly of forests interspersed with creeks and some wetlands (Figure 4). The forests in the park contain a substantial portion of old-growth trees as roughly half of them are older than 251 years.

**Figure 4: Wetland in Long Creek Park**

[3] British Columbia's biogeoclimatic classification system divides ecosystems into biogeoclimatic (BEC) zones representing climatic variations associated with specific types of soils, plant and animal communities. Within zones, subzones and variants reflect finer-scale climatic variations.

The park falls within the occurrence range of the red-listed southern mountain population of the Mountain Caribou. The status of this population is Threatened as per the *Species At Risk Act*. As per the applicable recovery strategy[3], Long Creek Park falls within critical habitat of the Quesnel Highlands Local Population Unit of the southern mountain population.

The habitat for these Mountain Caribou was protected as a Wildlife Habitat Area under the *Forest and Range Practices Act* and since establishment of the park under the *Park Act*. The mineral lick is an essential component of habitat for local red-listed caribou populations and other wildlife as it is essential for wildlife health and survival. From the beginning of May to the end of August, the mineral lick in the park is critically important for the red-listed caribou, including calves using the mineral lick to ingest minerals essential for their survival. During this time, these caribou are very sensitive to human disturbance.

Long Creek Park completely falls within Grizzly Bear habitat identified under the Cariboo Chilcotin Land Use Plan.

Bull Trout and Rainbow Trout occur at the lower reaches of Long Creek just above Quesnel Lake but have not been confirmed to occur further upstream in the park.

The park is part of a mosaic of landscape components connecting species habitats and ecosystems. Although the park is relatively small, it connects with extensive Wildlife Habitat Areas for Mountain Caribou where timber harvesting is restricted (see Figure 1). These Wildlife Habitat Areas connect in turn with a large complex of protected areas in the east (Figure 1). Together, these linkages between the park and various landscape components enhance connectivity for various plant and wildlife species.

## 2.3 Cultural Values

First Nations likely use the park for hunting and other uses of spiritual significance. Archaeological overview assessments reveal that most of the park has a high or medium potential for archaeological sites.

## 2.4 Recreation Values

As a recreation destination, the park holds limited opportunities for backcountry recreation such as guided outfitting and wildlife and nature viewing, as well as limited unguided snowshoeing. The inaccessibility and remoteness of the park limits its usefulness as a recreation destination to those visitors and/or guides skilled in backcountry navigation and survival, because no backcountry roads or maintained hiking trails lead directly to the park or continue in the park. A recreation trail allows travel to about 500 metres north of the park. It is not clear, however, how well maintained this trail is and how it connects to other trails or roads.

Although two commercial recreation tenures for nature viewing and other activities overlap with the park, it doesn't appear to be used frequently for recreational activities

other than occasional guided and unguided hunting and guided nature viewing. Current and historic visitor numbers are unknown.

There is no infrastructure in the park besides a trapline cabin (see Figure 2).

## 2.5 Climate Change

In British Columbia, climate change effects vary by region. Long Creek Park falls within the Cariboo Regional District for which predictive[4] modelling indicates that, from 2040 to 2069, mean annual temperature, annual precipitation, frost-free days, and annual growing degree days will likely increase substantially; whereas snow fall and summer precipitation will likely decrease substantially. These climatic changes will likely result in changes to ecosystem composition, structure and function across the landscape. The severity and extent of these changes will accelerate if measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and curb climate change are not implemented.

Along with other possible ramifications, these projected climatic changes may result in hydrological changes affecting the creeks flowing through Long Creek Park. These hydrological changes could in turn affect the ecosystems of Long Creek Park including the mineral lick. Yet, no research specific to Long Creek Park supports this assertion.

Protected areas have a role in mitigating the impacts of climate change by naturally storing carbon, reducing non-climate stressors and providing a refuge for species that migrate when conditions become unfavourable in their existing habitats.

[4] Pacific Climate Impacts Consortium. Plan2Adapt. Web based analysis tool accessed in 2015. URL at: http://www.pacificclimate.org/analysis-tools/plan2adapt

# 3.0 Management Direction

## 3.1 Management Vision

**Long Creek Park protects an intact mineral lick for Mountain Caribou. Human use of the area occurs in a manner that allows the caribou unimpeded use of the mineral lick. Where appropriate, visitors experienced in backcountry navigation and survival continue to enjoy low impact backcountry recreation in a remote wilderness environment**

## 3.2 Management Objectives and Strategies

| Management Context | Management Objectives and Strategies |
|---|---|
| From the beginning of May to the end of August, the mineral lick in the park is critically important for the red-listed caribou, including calves using the mineral lick to ingest minerals essential for their survival. During this time, these caribou are very sensitive to human disturbance. Any inappropriate human activities will impede the use of the mineral lick. | **Management Objective: Protect an intact mineral lick and healthy caribou habitat and ensure human access to the park is conducted in a manner that minimizes impacts to the caribou.**<br>**Management Strategies:**<br>Allow unguided recreation, including snow shoeing, and nature and wildlife viewing from the beginning of September until the end of April. Do not allow unguided recreation from the beginning of May until the end of August.<br>Allow guided (i.e., under park use permit) recreation year-round.<br>Develop etiquette for guided (i.e., under park use permit) recreational activities in the park to maintain the integrity of the mineral lick. If necessary for maintaining the integrity of the mineral lick, develop and establish limits for group size and total visitor numbers.<br>Do not allow camping.<br>Allow maintenance of the existing trapping cabin (see Figure 2) but do not support establishment of any other infrastructure or facilities in the park. |
| While Mountain Caribou conservation is the highest priority, allowing for limited opportunities for safe low impact | Do not allow motorized activities (except for activities related to the registered trapline). Work with the trapline tenure holder to minimize motorized activities from May to September.<br>Where appropriate, alert visitors about necessary wilderness survival skills and other safety measures required for a safe visit in this remote wilderness. |

| Management Context | Management Objectives and Strategies |
|---|---|
| wilderness recreation is also important. Park use permits for guided activities provide an opportunity to ensure strict visitation etiquette is applied during the very sensitive summer months.<br><br>There are commitments to allow trapping and hunting to continue in the area. | Ensure that recreational activities in the park are compatible with each. If necessary for public safety, support temporal and spatial separation of activities (e.g., during hunting season, avoid nature viewing where hunting occurs).<br><br>Work with wildlife managers to maintain the ecological integrity of the mineral lick as well as wildlife habitats for the red-listed and threatened Mountain Caribou and other wildlife species.<br><br>Monitor the mineral lick periodically to ensure that it remains adequately protected.<br><br>Monitor adjacent land use activities for potential impacts on the park's ecological values. Where adjacent land uses, such as timber harvesting and mineral exploration activities have the potential to impact the park, as for example through ground disturbance upslope of the mineral lick, build relationships with tenure holders and federal and provincial agencies with interests in terrestrial areas adjacent to the park. |
| The park may be affected by climate change, but there is substantial uncertainty regarding the impacts and outcomes of those changes on the parks values. | **Management Objective: Improve knowledge and understanding of the effects of climate change on the park's biodiversity values.**<br><br>**Management Strategies:**<br><br>Support research and other efforts to monitor and evaluate the effects of climate change on park values, particularly the mineral lick, and other values potentially sensitive to increasing temperature and precipitation and other predicted regional climatic changes (see section 2.5). |
| Land uses and activities occurring in the park require appropriate permits. | **Management Objective: Ensure that land uses and activities in the park are appropriately authorized.**<br><br>**Management Strategies:**<br><br>Ensure permits are issued for all land uses, tenures, and activities in the park which require authorization under the *Park Act*. Such activities include trapping, guide outfitting and commercial recreation (see Section 1.6) |

## 3.3 Zoning Plan

In general terms, a zoning plan divides a protected area into logical management units within which certain activities/uses are permitted and a particular set of management objectives apply. Zones are designed to reflect the physical environment, existing patterns of use and the desired level of management and development in a given management unit.

Long Creek Park is zoned in its entirety as Special Natural Feature Zone. This zone protects a fragile mineral lick while providing for some wilderness recreation with very low visitor use levels.

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# 4.0 Plan Implementation

## 4.1 Implementation Plan

Specific projects will be evaluated for priority in relation to the overall protected areas system. Where needed, BC Parks will seek project-specific funding and partners to implement management strategies.

## 4.2 High Priority Strategies

The following strategies have been identified as high priorities for implementation:

1. Work with wildlife managers to maintain the ecological integrity of the mineral lick as well as wildlife habitats for the red-listed and threatened Mountain Caribou and other wildlife species.
2. Monitor adjacent land use activities for potential impacts on the park's ecological values.
3. Allow guided backcountry recreation year-round. Acceptable guided tourism opportunities include guide outfitting, and guided wilderness nature and wildlife tours.

## 4.3 Plan Assessment

In order to ensure that the management direction for Long Creek Park remains relevant and effective, BC Parks staff will ensure that the management plan is assessed by BC Parks staff on a regular basis (i.e., at least every 5 years). Minor administrative updates may be identified and completed at any time (e.g., correct spelling errors and update protected area details where needed), and will be documented according to BC Parks guidelines.

If an internal assessment reveals that the management plan requires more significant updating or substantial new management direction is needed, a formal review by BC Parks may be initiated to determine whether the management plan requires an amendment or if a new management plan is required.

The management plan amendment process or development of a new management plan includes an opportunity for public input

# Appendix 1: Appropriate Use Table

The following table summarizes existing and potential future uses in Long Creek Park that are and are not appropriate in the Special Natural Feature Zone. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list of all uses that may be considered in this protected area in the future.

Please note that appropriate uses may be geographically restricted (i.e., only allowed in certain areas of Long Creek Park) or are only appropriate at certain times of the year. Please ensure that you are well informed of any use restrictions as indicated in the table. It is important to review relevant sections of the management plan when interpreting the table.

| **Appropriate Use Table Legend** | | |
|---|---|---|
| **N** | **Not an appropriate use** | The use is not appropriate in the indicated zone. If the use currently exists but the management planning process has determined that the use is no longer appropriate in all or part of the park, the management plan will include strategies for ending the activity (e.g., phasing out, closing). |
| **Y** | **May be an appropriate use** | Some level or extent of this use may be appropriate in the zone indicated. The management plan may provide guidance on the appropriate level of use and may address specific restrictions or planned enhancements (e.g. capacity, designated areas for a particular activity, party size, time of year, etc.).<br><br>For new or expanded uses, this symbol indicates that the use may be considered for further evaluation. The appropriateness of some activities may not be confirmed until a further assessment (e.g., BC Parks Impact Assessment Process) or evaluation process (e.g., park use permit adjudication) is completed. |
| **Y1** | **Appropriate use as per section 30 of the *Park Act*** | The use is not normally appropriate in a park but was occurring pursuant to an encumbrance or Crown authorization at the time the protected area was established and is allowed to continue. |

| Activity/Facility | Wilderness Recreation Zone | Comments |
|---|---|---|
| **Recreational Activities/Uses** | | |
| Camping (backcountry - designated sites) | N | |
| Camping (wilderness style-undesignated sites) | N | |
| Fish Stocking | N | |
| Hiking | Y | See recommendations and seasonal restrictions for unguided activities in section 3.2 |
| Hunting | Y | |
| Land-based Motorized Activity (e.g., 4x4, motorcycles, ATV-not including snowmobiles, or snowcats) | N | Except for activities related to trapping, do not allow motorized access to avoid impacts on mineral lick. |
| Snow-shoeing (backcountry) | Y | |
| Skiing (backcountry) | Y | |
| **Recreation Facilities/Infrastructure** | | |
| Cabins, Huts and Shelters (as defined in the Fixed Roof Accommodation Policy) | N | Except for existing trapping cabin, see section 3.2 |
| Lodges (as defined in the Fixed Roof Accommodation Policy) | N | |
| Campground | N | |
| Picnic Areas | N | |
| Roads | N | |
| Trail | N | |
| Visitor Information Buildings | N | |
| **Other Activities/Infrastructure** | | |
| Grazing | Y1 | As per section 30 of the *Park Act*. |
| Trapping | Y | |

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